



michigan league of conservation voters

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Testimony on SB 1212
Michigan Senate
Committee on Natural Resources, Environment and Great Lakes

September 13, 2012

Dear Senators,

One of the biggest challenges facing the Great Lakes is the damage caused by invasive species, many of which arrived in the Great Lakes by stowing away in the ballast tanks of oceangoing vessels.

In 2005, Michigan took the lead on protecting the Great Lakes by passing a Ballast Water Statute that requires oceangoing vessels to either refrain from dumping ballast water in the lakes or to use environmentally sound treatment measures. SB 1212, though, would insert a loophole in the Ballast Water Statute that could allow new invasive species into the Great Lakes.

SB 1212 would identify one specific treatment method - deep-sea ballast water exchange - that could satisfy the permit requirements. This is the same method required by the Coast Guard that - because it could still allow invasive species through - prompted Michigan to enact the Ballast Water Statute in the first place. Even the Coast Guard is updating its standards away from this method, though there is debate about whether even its upgraded standards will be strong enough. SB 1212, however, would lock this method in place, essentially repealing Michigan's Ballast Water Statute.

Invasive species cost the Great Lakes region \$200 million a year, according to the National Wildlife Federation. That's \$1 billion every five years, which is only a drop in the bucket, though, compared to the \$7 billion Great Lakes fishery and \$12.8 billion tourism economy. An estimated 823,000 Michigan jobs depend on the Great Lakes and tourism, and 90,000 jobs depend on the Great Lakes just in the counties which border them. As more of those counties are in Michigan than any other state, Michigan has to be the leader in protecting the Great Lakes from the invasive species which threaten those jobs.

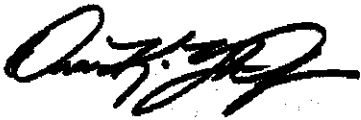
Invasive species prevention is one of the few truly bipartisan issues in Michigan. The 2005 Ballast Water Statute also passed the Senate unanimously, and only one representative voted against it.

According to DEQ statistics, less than 1% of port operations in Michigan are from oceangoing vessels. This means that we would be risking a \$7 billion fishery, a \$12.8 billion dollar economy, and tens - if not hundreds - of thousands of jobs for what amounts to approximately five or six oceangoing vessels, according to DEQ estimates.

Michigan has long been a leader in protecting the Great Lakes from invasive species. As The Great Lakes State, it's up to us to set the bar for other states about what's expected of them to keep the Great Lakes healthy. How can we ask Chicago to stand up to shipping interests and close the Chicago locks to keep out Asian carp, when we're letting invasive species into the Great Lakes by weakening our ballast requirements? Michigan has too much at stake - too many jobs - to stop being a leader now.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



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